

# VA HIV Testing Information for Veterans

Fact Sheet | May 2010

[www.hiv.va.gov](http://www.hiv.va.gov)

## Who should get an HIV test?

- Public health experts recommend that **all** adults get tested for HIV as part of their routine medical care.
- Everyone—not just people who think they are at risk—should be tested.

## Why should I get an HIV test?

- An HIV test is the only way to be certain about your HIV status.
- A person with HIV could show no symptoms for years, but could still pass the virus on to others.
- Like many other diseases, it is better to diagnose and treat HIV early rather than late.
- There have been many advances in the treatment of HIV. As a result, people with HIV often live much longer and healthier lives than before.
- The earlier HIV is detected, the sooner a person can receive excellent care provided by VA and begin taking steps to remain healthy for years to come.

## What does the test involve?

- HIV testing within VA is voluntary and confidential. It is up to you to decide whether you want to be tested.
- Before deciding, you will be given educational materials on HIV and HIV testing. VA also encourages you to ask your provider any questions you may have.
- If you give your consent to be tested, an HIV test will be done with either a sample of blood or fluid (saliva) from inside your mouth. For the blood test, blood is drawn either from an arm or from a finger with a needlestick. For the oral-fluid test, a swab is used to brush the inside of your mouth.



## TAKE THE TEST, TAKE CONTROL

Even if you do not think you are at risk, talk to your provider about taking the HIV test.





- The type of test you can get depends on what is offered by your VA facility.
- Traditional blood test results are available in 1-2 weeks. Some facilities offer rapid tests that provide preliminary results in around 20 minutes. However, all positive results with the rapid test will require confirmation with a blood test.

### Can having an HIV test affect my VA Benefits?

- Your HIV test result will not affect your VA care or your eligibility for VA benefits.
- You have the right to refuse HIV testing without losing medical benefits or any right to care.



### Where can I find more information?

- [www.hiv.va.gov](http://www.hiv.va.gov)

